

least his party would challenge and chastise the government, for using public funds to publicize its position. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, were I allowed to use stronger language, I would be able to describe more aptly what they have done in terms of commenting on what this government has done with public funds to publicize a particular act of the government, a bill, a position or a point of view that was put forward.

But when it comes to something which they would like to have publicized, the fact that public funds were not used for the purpose, of course, is wrong too. So we find ourselves in the strange position of being dammed if we do and dammed if we don't, and only the party over there can do the damming.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

● (1730)

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): You are getting to them, Bob.

Mr. Daudlin: I do not know whether I am getting to them. I am starting to hear some life on the other side. It is good to know they are listening. There are occasions when one's words fall either on deaf ears or the ears of those who do not want to hear. But today someone is listening, and I express my appreciation to hon. members across the way.

The hon. member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe made reference to social insurance numbers. There are many members on both sides of the House who share his comments and thoughts with respect to the ever-increasing use of social insurance numbers. As a matter of fact, some of my colleagues and I have absolutely refused to provide our social insurance numbers when we felt that it was an unreasonable and unfair request. This practice has crept in. Perhaps we should be exercising some leadership in an attempt to stop it.

The hon. member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe formed part of a government which started a review on how those numbers were being used. He should know—and indeed he must know—that the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development (Mr. Chrétien) renewed and continued the mandate which in fact had been given by the former government. More than that, he enlarged the mandate with respect to that review and examination to determine just how widespread the use of social insurance numbers had become, for what they were being used, whether they were being used for the kinds of things which should be allowed and whether there were uses of which we were not even aware that should be stopped. The mandate has not been concluded; the report has not been done. I am glad to say that the government does not act in advance of the reports and recommendations it is seeking. It would be false economy to ask for a report and then prepare legislation in advance of it. It would be wrong to request a report and then attempt to pass legislation through the House without the benefit of the report. It is my understanding that in fact the report will be available shortly. Once we have it, we will be able to examine social insurance numbers much more comprehensively than we would have been able to had we brought that matter in at the same time as

this legislation. In short, it would have been premature. I am glad it has not been done without the benefit of the report and that recommendations will come forward once the report is completed.

I had the honour of being parliamentary secretary to the secretary of state in a former government when in fact the green paper on freedom of information was being discussed. I was parliamentary secretary at the time the committee appointed to conduct a study was examining that paper.

I recognize full well the difficulties of the Secretary of State and Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox) in bringing forward this particular piece of legislation. It was not an easy job. It is not the kind of thing one can sit down in a night or even a full month of nights and come forward with, because of the balancing act one must do between the rights of access and privacy. Also there are difficulties with periods, commas and words in terms of drafting. I sincerely congratulate the Secretary of State for bringing forward this piece of legislation. All of us recognize that it is high time, but we are glad it is now before us and we are moving forward to have the matter sent to committee. Ultimately we hope it will be brought into law.

I echo hon. members on both sides of the House who have said it would be folly for us to believe what we have before us in its present state is perfection. It will require work, polishing and amendment before it comes back. The minister indicated that he is prepared to assist in that regard. It would be folly to believe after it has been considered in committee, brought back to the House and debated at third reading, that it will be perfect. Indeed, it will not be, but it is a starting point. It is a credit to the House that we are moving toward that position.

I want to make the point as strongly as I can that the review provision included in this bill is the correct direction in which to go in terms of attempting to retain the division between the judiciary and the legislative branches. Also it gives credence to the concerns expressed not only by those people who want further, more and greater access to information, but also those who have expressed the possible severe interference which could take place if we go too far. I need go no further than the police chiefs associations that have been very concerned, not only the ones in Canada but also the ones in the United States when its particular legislation was passed. It seems to me that associations across the world have been concerned whenever this type of legislation came forward. They are concerned among other things, that if we go too far, we will run into terrible problems in terms of how information such as the names of informants will be kept secret. If in fact informants come forward to assist in combating organized crime, surely we will have to be careful to ensure secrecy. Such information cannot go through many hands. We all know how easily information such as that can slip through fingers, disappear or get into the wrong hands. Surely we would not want one informant disappearing by taking a long walk off a short pier.

It would result in the drying up of that source of information and the inability of our police forces to obtain the assistance they need to combat the crime which we all want